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SUBJECT: MEA STATEMENTS AND BRIEFINGS: MALAYSIA, SLOVAKIA, KOREA, NEIGHBORS

[¶1.](#) Summary: This is another of our periodic messages summarizing public statements by MEA Spokesman Navtej Sarna and other MEA officials. Here we report Malaysian Prime Minister Badawi's and Slovak President Gasparovic's visits to India, Foreign Minister Natwar Singh's trip to South Korea and the December 21 meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on External Affairs. End Summary

Premier Badawi visits India

[¶2.](#) From December 20-25 Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi visited India. The trip resulted in business agreements on IT, biotechnology and satellite systems. On December 21, the GOI announced a deal between the Indian Space Research Organization's (ISRO) Antrix Corporation and MEASAT Global to form a joint venture. The two companies plan to pool their capacity to create a "satellite neighborhood." PM Badawi also traveled to Bangalore, which included a stop at Hindustan Aeronautics, Ltd. (HAL). The MEA emphasized Malaysia's ASEAN membership, noting that the country is India's largest trading partner in the association.

Slovak President Visits India

[¶3.](#) President Ivan Gasparovic paid a five-day visit to India from December 11, during which the two countries signed an Economic Cooperation Agreement. While not explicitly indicating Slovakian support for India's objective of obtaining a permanent seat on the UNSC, the MEA announced that Gasparovic was "of the view that India's permanent presence in an expanded UN Security Council would give it greater legitimacy and enhance its effectiveness."

Neighborhood Review

[¶4.](#) On December 21 FM Singh met the Parliament's External Affairs Consultative Committee to review India's relations with the SAARC member countries and Burma. According to MEA Spokesman Sarna, the discussion also addressed New Delhi's plan for the January 2005 SAARC Summit in Dhaka.

--Nepal: there is a need to improve infrastructure along the border, including an integrated system of checkpoints, the Maoists are a "shared security concern," and discussions are ongoing for extradition and mutual legal assistance treaties.

--Bhutan: the Chukha and Kurichu power projects and the 1020 MW Tala Hydropower project should be completed shortly, and the Bhutanese King will be the Chief Guest for Republic Day on January 26, 2005.

--Bangladesh: the GOI would like the BDG to address New Delhi's security concerns, and increasingly, Indian businesses are interested in investing in Bangladesh.

--Burma: the country has "direct bearing" on security and development in India's Northeast, and the GOI will pursue "constructive engagement" with Rangoon. Burma is an important link between India and ASEAN.

--Sri Lanka: the economic relationship is a "model" among India's neighbors and Colombo supports India for a permanent UNSC seat.

--Pakistan: the atmosphere has improved and New Delhi will follow a "conscious people-centric" policy which will lead to an improved understanding of India's position.

FM Singh in Seoul

[¶5.](#) December 13-16 FM Singh traveled to Korea to discuss the bilateral security dialogue, which will begin in January 2005, and to finalize an MOU on defense cooperation. According to the MEA, Korean officials "commended the Indian initiative on the vision of an Asian Economic Community."

[¶6.](#) The MEA's Sarna noted that media reports suggesting that while in Seoul the Foreign Minister had called India's 1998 nuclear test "regrettable," were a distortion of the facts.

The Spokesman emphasized that FM Singh had said that the 1998 test was the previous government's decision and that although India is not a party to the NPT, which is discriminatory, those countries that are should honor their commitments.

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End Cable Text

Myrta Browne 01/04/2005 12:28:19 PM From DB/Inbox: Myrta Browne

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